# Connecticut Historical Society
# BULLETIN

Volume 14 Hartford, October, 1949 Number 4

*Highboy, cherry, circa 1775-1780*
*in the Seymour Collection*

## THE SEYMOUR COLLECTION

Under the will of the late George Dudley Seymour, the Society received a fine collection of antique furniture. Unfortunately exhibition space in our building is not available so that the collection is stored in a warehouse. This is a very unhappy situation, for the Society is deriving no benefit from a valuable asset and the donor little honor for his thoughtfulness and generosity.

It was Mr. Seymour's wish that a catalogue of his collection be prepared and published as soon as convenient. In order to accomplish this it was necessary to examine and catalogue each article. To assist in this task, the Society employed a trained cabinetmaker to prepare the physical description of each piece, and a photographer to photograph in color everything in the collection, and in black and white those pieces of unusual significance that might be used as illustrations in the projected catalogue. Consequently we now have 130 2 x 2 color slides of the Seymour collection, and twelve 8 x 10 photographs of specific items.

These photographs and slides are, first of all, a record of the collection. They are valuable for study and assistance in the compiling of a catalogue of the collection. They also make available more than 350 slides which can be lent to interested institutions or can be used by staff members in talks about the Society throughout the State. Their value can not be overestimated for, since 95% of most museums is storage anyway, it is now possible for us in effect to bring our museum to you, wherever you are. Information concerning their use may be had by addressing the Librarian.

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## NEWS OF THE SOCIETY

In December the Society received a letter from A. W. Moverley, Education Officer at Pitcairn Island, requesting the conditions under which we would consider the return of the "Bounty" Bible to Pitcairn Island.

Proud that it had for 52 years carefully preserved this interesting relic so that it might some day return home, the Society promptly voted to give back the Bible on permanent loan. Sir Oliver Franks, British Ambassador, accepted responsibility for delivery and the incident was considered closed so far as we were concerned.

The "incident", as we referred to it, attracted world-wide attention. Pictures of the Bible, here, in Washington and in London, have appeared in the public press. Many persons both far and near took the trouble to commend the Society for its action. One in particular, from Liverpool, England, printed in *The Hartford Courant* is worthy of note:

> . . . A certain book "disappeared" from a midget island some 110 years ago. In the eyes of the person responsible, the book was nothing but a souvenir to support his claim to have tasted adventure. The incident could have been forgotten. Meantime your Historical Society preserved and cherished the treasure with efficient care. The time lapse must surely have made it yours for keeps. "Finding's keeping's" would answer the demands of most rough justice.

To her credit, the United States has an unsleeping conscience. Having gained her dollars by honest means, she reckons on practising honesty, even in transactions not strictly commercial. Back that book is going, at her command, to the place where she considers it belongs. (The Bible of the Bounty to Pitcairn Island).

I insist that this is a minor matter, this righting of a simple misdemeanor, understandable to all who, in war time, have soldiered and sailored and taken to the air. I insist, too, that this story, now ended happily, deserves to take a not too inconspicuous place, in your school curricula, alongside the Gettysburg address. That latter stirs the emotions to fervour. This other warms the heart, making one feel good inside.

Thanks, America. Thanks especially, Connecticut. Your State must suffer loss that Pitcairn may regain. . . .

In addition, we have recently received a report from the bindery of the Public Record Office, in London, which is of interest because it shows the work involved and care taken in the preservation of historic relics. The following is abstracted from their report:

It was necessary to repair the torn and worn pages of the end sections and to renovate the binding. The volume was therefore taken partly to pieces, and from an examination of it while in this condition it became evident that:

1. The volume consisted of a Bible and a Prayer Book, which had originally been separate volumes.
2. One of these volumes had been bound in boards covered with calf.
3. When the two volumes were bound up together, these boards were used in the new binding, with some fragments of the original calf still adhering to them.
4. This double volume was then covered in vellum; and this vellum cover would be that familiar to the mutineers of the "Bounty" and to their descendants upon Pitcairn Island.
5. The vellum cover, like the pages of the volume, became worn and broken by use; and at some period—probably about 1850-1860, after it had left Pitcairn Island—the volume was rebound in leather, with the remaining fragment of the vellum cover attached outside. This leather cover, and the vellum fragment, are preserved in the Album.

How then, was the Bible to be re-bound? There were four possibilities:

1. To break down the volume into Bible and Prayer Book again, and to bind each separately. This would reproduce the volume's "original" form, but not that in which it was familiar to the crew of the "Bounty".
2. To restore the leather cover, with the fragment of vellum attached, in which the volume reached the Public Record Office. This would perpetuate the volume's existing form, which equally the crew of the "Bounty", and the inhabitants of Pitcairn, would not have recognized.
3. To rebind in the style suggested by the vellum fragment, and to incorporate the fragment. This was considered impracticable; the old and horny vellum would make an unsatisfactory match, in both colour and texture, with new material.
4. To rebind entirely in new vellum, in the style suggested by the vellum fragment and known to be usual for ships' Bible of that period; and

to preserve carefully all fragments of earlier bindings. This course was taken; at the same time the front sections of the volume were repaired with new paper, and a number of letters, newspaper cuttings, etc. which had been pasted into the Bible were removed to the accompanying Album.

In addition to the above report, the Colonial Office offered the Society in appreciation for the return of the Bible, photo copies of certain early manuscript maps of Connecticut now in the Public Record Office. The Society was delighted to take advantage of this kind offer and to add these great rareties to its collection. As far as we now know, only tracings of the 1720 1726 map and a reproduction of the 1697 map, in *The Crown Collection of Photographs of American Maps,* Series III, Vol. 1 (Nos. 45, 46), are available in this country. The following photo copies have been received and catalogued for those interested:

1697 Boundings of New Cambridge County in New England. Beginning at the middle part of the mouth or entrance of Connecticut in New England, and from thence to proceed along the Coast of the Sea to the Narragansets River or Harbour, there to be accounted sixty miles, and so up the Western Arme of that River to the head thereof, and unto the land north west ward till sixty miles be finished, and so to cross over land south west ward to meet with the end of sixty miles to be accounted from the Mouth of Connecticutt up north west, and also all Islands and Isletts as well in bayed as within five Leagues distance from the premisses and abutting upon the same or any part or parcel thereof. By M. C., 1697. scale about 8 miles to 1 inch.
18 x 22 inches

1720 Map of Connecticut describing the ancient boundaries of the Colony. Transmitted with a letter 14th September, 1720. scale 2 miles to 1 inch.
20 x 36 inches [reduced]

1726 A true copy taken from the map annexed to the Order of His Majestie in Council at St. Jame's, bearing date the 8th February, 1726, in the Case between the two Colonies of Rhode Island, etc. and Connecticut; with the Addition of the Word GORE on one part of the Land now in Controversy. scale 6 miles to 1 inch. 7½ x 12¾ inches

[1760?] A Plan of the River Connecticut from its source to the boundary line which divides the Provinces of New Hampshire and Massachusetts Bay. Surveyed . . . by Mr. James Grant, Dep. Surveyor. In ten sheets with Index plan showing the whole course of the River. Drawn by Thos. Wheeler. scale ¾ mile to 1 inch.
7 sheets 20 x 13¼ inches
3 sheets 20 x 28 inches

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In our recent Annual Report we briefly noted that steel blue-print cases, which we would use for the storage of oversize prints and maps, might now be obtained for about $150. This included base, cap and five-drawer unit.

One of our most generous benefactors, seeing this, immediately forwarded a check for that amount as his gift to the Society this year. We are deeply grateful and also are much relieved that a portion of these large prints and maps, so carefully mounted and repaired, are now to be properly stored, and protected from dust and the dangers of tearing when handled. It seems so futile to continue collecting certain types of objects when, after we obtain them we have no place to keep them. Several more units at $125 each can be used to good advantage, and therefore contributions in any amount will be gratefully received.

## ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEW PUBLICATION

The Society takes pleasure in announcing the publication, on November 15 next, of *Colt's Own Record of Transactions with Walker and Whitney in 1847*. This volume will contain over 100 previously unpublished documents, including letters, contracts, inventories, memoranda and accounts from the collection of the Society. These are carefully transcribed by the Society with extensive notes by John E. Parsons. The edition will be limited to 1,000 copies, approximately 200 pages, 7 x 10 inches, handsomely printed on 70 pound white wove Strathmore Courier paper and bound with lithographed paper over boards and 8 collotype illustrations.

The correspondence published in this volume completes the account of the manufacture in 1847 of the Walker model of the Colt revolver at Whitneyville, Connecticut. Chronologically presented, the story tells itself. The letters and documents come from Samuel Colt's own file, preserved by Mrs. Colt after his death, and presented to The Connecticut Historical Society in 1915 by Charles E. Gross, one of her executors.

Since the story of the contracts has already been told, the significance of the publication is considered to lie in bringing to light much evidence and a wealth of particulars not previously known, in detailing the performance of the contracts by the principles and by various agents and subcontractors, and in presenting cost and inventory figures which resolve many previous perplexities. It is also hoped to correct certain misconceptions which have already appeared in print. While these particulars may be of special interest to collectors and students of arms, the correspondence as a whole affords the general reader, besides studies in character, an account of the problems involved in an industrial operation of the period. In the 1840's, manufacture of arms and other articles by machine tools had only just begun. Whitney and Colt were proponents of mass production and interchangeability of parts, probably the foremost in Connecticut. Their methods in fulfilling a Government contract for revolvers required for the War with Mexico, make a noteworthy chapter in the early industrial history of the State. Members receive the regular 20% discount on publications from the published price of $5 and it is suggested you order early.

# HARTFORD IN 1830:
# SOME THINGS THAT I REMEMBER ABOUT HARTFORD SIXTY YEARS AGO

By John Woodhull Stedman

*A Paper read before the Society November 11, 1890.*

*(Continued from page 24)*

I do not propose to trench upon Dr. Russell's[30] description of our outlying school districts but the old Stone Schoolhouse on Dorr (now School) Street, now the Brown School, may be alluded to as differing from them, and showing the change that the last sixty years have brought about in the system of public education in Hartford. The old house had three floors—only one-half of the lower floor was occupied by a schoolroom for the small children, who were taught reading and spelling, the other half was a storage place for wood. Female teachers were alone employed here. The second floor, all in one room, was presided over by a male teacher, who had two female assistants. Here the scholars were advanced in their reading, and a beginning in writing and arithmetic was added. On the upper floor, also in one room with little rooms partitioned off in two of the corners for recitation by the classes in geography and grammar, the principal of the whole school presided, with his two female assistants. Here the scholars, advanced from the lower rooms, were supposed to be polished off in reading, writing and arithmetic, and if they desired it they could study geography and grammar besides. These last studies were purely at the discretion of the pupils, and I doubt if one-quarter of them ever touched a grammar. In every grade the pupils were required only to study in the schoolroom. No books were ever carried home for study then. Each room was supposed to be heated in the winter by a large Franklin stove in the center, from which pipes extended all around the room to save the heat. No janitor was employed, but a fresh squad of boys was detailed every day, whose duty it was to bring up the wood from the cellar, build the fire before the school time in the morning, and keep it up during the day. If, as rarely happened, the temperature of the room five yards from the stove rose above the freezing point, for an hour after the opening of the school in the morning, the temperature out of doors ought to have had the credit for it instead of the stove. The anxious watching of the stove by the half-frozen teachers as the great pile of wood in it sizzled and snapped, was the main feature of the first hour of the morning session. The furniture of the room was very simple. The desks were long shallow boxes on tall legs, sloping slightly on the top, partitioned off in blocks of six, each with an opening in front for putting away the books and slates. The seats to match the desks were plain boxes, like candle boxes set on end, nailed on heavy planks, with an opening in the back in which to stow away hats and overcoats. Such a thing as a rest for the backs of the boys and girls of Hartford, sixty years ago, was not thought of. The only recesses of the school were one hour on Wednesday afternoon and the whole of Saturday

[30] Russell Gurdon Wadsworth (1815-1909)
*"Upneck" in 1825.* Hartford. Case, Lockwood & Brainard. 1890.
24 cm. 145 pp.

afternoon in each week. These were the occasions for detailing a squad of boys to sweep out the schoolroom. The only whole day vacations that were known were Fast Day, Election Day, Training Day, Fourth of July and Thanksgiving Day. Every other day in the year was a school day. Christmas was of no account. After the children had drawn their presents from their stockings in the morning and the formal salutations of Merry Christmas had passed around, nothing more was thought of the day by people generally.

In thinking of the old Stone School the name most intimately associated with it in my mind is that of Jesse Olney. I remember but little of the detail of his methods of teaching, and am inclined to think that he had but little taste for details, but I remember distinctly that when he had the floor it was a hard time for sleepyheads. The custom was at noon, before dismissing the school, for the scholars to read in turn, sentence by sentence, a chapter in a reading book, containing either some valuable information, or lofty patriotic sentiments, and if there was an opening for a question that would arouse the interest of the scholars and teach them to think of what they were reading, it was improved by the teacher at once. An illustration of this is vividly impressed upon my memory. We were reading one morning in the *National Preceptor* a chapter from Irving's *Astoria,* in which the story of Colter's running for life is narrated. This hardy trapper was captured by the Blackfeet Indians, and while they meant finally to torture him to death, they tantalized him by pretending to allow him to run for his life. It is related that he was stripped naked and brought out on the prairie some distance in front of his persecutors. He knew the ground perfectly, and knew that it was six miles to a fork of the Missouri River, which, if he could reach, it was possible that he could secrete himself from his pursuers in the thick undergrowth of bushes on its banks. This passage describes the instant that he was released and ordered to run, and was read by one of the scholars—"How could he hope to hold out for the distance of six miles with the fearful odds of several hundreds to one against him?" "Stop, sir," said Mr. Olney. "What does it mean by fearful odds? Can five hundred men run faster than one?" Then calling one after another upon several of his brightest scholars, he continued, "Can you answer?" For the few minutes that this subject was before the school in this animated manner, a valuable and lasting impression was made upon the mind of every scholar in the school.

The common currency of the people of New England sixty years ago was the silver coin of South America and Mexico. The silver coin of the United States was seldom seen, and the gold coin never. Small values were always expressed in shillings and pence. Spanish coin was used, but values were expressed in the language of English colonial days. There were six shillings of sixteen and two-thirds cents each—to the dollar. There was no shilling coin, but the Spanish money was easily computed in shillings and pence. Commencing with the smallest coin—four and a half pence (the four pence ha' penny) or six and a quarter cents, then came the ninepence, or twelve and a half cents, then the quarter of a dollar, then half dollar and the Spanish milled dollar. The common expression for the value of a quarter of a dollar was one and sixpence—thirty-seven and a half cents was two and threepence—fifty cents was three shillings—sixty-two and a half cents, three and nine pence—seventy-five cents, four and sixpence, and so on. In

the common dealing of people federal money below a dollar was seldom mentioned. Even the United States postage, up to about 1840, was rated upon the Spanish coin—six and a quarter cents—twelve and a half cents—and eighteen and three-quarters cents. This great republic was thus exacting a rate of postage from the people which it was impossible for them to pay in the coin of the land, and it took our wise men at Washington fifty years to realize what a very ridiculous thing this was to do. And so hard was it to break up this old form of computation which had been ground into the common speech of the people, for two hundred years, that the examples in the common school arithmetic of that time were in pounds, shillings and pence. The only reason I ever heard given for this method of teaching arithmetic in schools was, that it was far more difficult than computing federal money, and therefore better for mental exercise and training. Perhaps the proverbial skill in figures attributed to our Connecticut people grew out of this method of teaching. This method of expressing values was convenient for computing wages of labor. There were six working days in the week and six shillings to the dollar. The laborer who contracted for five shillings a day had five dollars a week—seven and sixpence a day was seven dollars and a half a week, and so on. The wages of daily labor were always expressed in this way, by shillings and pence.

Sixty years ago there were few avocations open to boys in Hartford approaching the self-supporting age except mechanical trades. The sons of the rich might select professions, and might be wanted as clerks in stores, but the great mass of boys saw no opening in the world for them but an apprenticeship in the workshop. The thousand varieties of agency, insurance, postal, electrical, railroad and newspaper business, now open to our growing boys, was then entirely unknown. An apprenticeship then meant board, and from twenty-five to forty dollars a year for clothes, for six or seven years. Or if the boy was permitted to board at home he was allowed, perhaps, one and sixpence a day for that. The youngest apprentice in any shop led a hard and discouraging life so long as he remained the youngest, and I have often wondered if a boy could now be found who would endure hardships which were then a matter of course. His daily hours of work were scarcely ever less than twelve, and in the winter, fifteen. To bring up and feed the old-fashioned box stoves with four foot wood (for anthracite coal was then unknown) in large shops, during the cold days of winter, was not a light task in itself, but this was only an incident in his duties. Following up his daily routine duties through the year, with only two or three holidays and no vacation at all, the time for any kind of recreation or mental improvement was limited indeed. Yet in after years, when Hartford was developing her great material interests, and establishing those literary and humane institutions which were to elevate her character and make her famous throughout the land, and wealthy, it was largely those whose boyhood had been passed in scenes not less laborious and unpromising than these, that came to the front and were her leaders and representatives. All the professions were also adorned with them.

*(To be Continued)*

*The Price of these Bulletins is ten cents each*